

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SY-10 USSS-00

RSR-01 /073 W

----- 071127

R 130938Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9463

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5355

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS, JA

SUBJECT: KIM TAE-CHUNG KIDNAPPING

SUMMARY: WEEKEND KOREAN PRESS HAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE FRONT PAGE COVERAGE TO KIM TAE CHUNG KIDNAPPING. STORIES CONCENTRATE ON AUGUST 11 PRESS CONFERENCE OF DEMOCRATIC UNIFICATION PARTY (DUP) LEADER YANG IL-DONG IN WHICH HE GAVE HIS VERSION OF ABDUCTION. ALSO GIVEN WIDE COVERAGE WERE STORIES EMPHASIZING LACK OF PROGRESS IN JAPANESE POLICE INVESTIGATION, WARNINGS TO JAPANESE PRESS TO GIVE MORE BALANCED COVERAGE, AND PROPOSALS BY NDP AND DUP FOR DESPATCH THEIR OWN INVESTIGATIVE GROUPS TO JAPAN. MOFA HAS REFUSED TO LET MRS. KIM TAE-CHUNG TRAVEL TO JAPAN. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL KOREAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPERS GAVE EXTENSIVE FRONT PAGE COVERAGE TO DUP LEADER YANG IL-DONG'S AUGUST 11 PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE GAVE HIS VERSION OF KIM ATE-CHUNG KIDNAPPING. ACCORDING TO YANG, KIM TAE-CHUNG HAD REQUESTED A VISIT WITH YANG IN HIS HOTEL ROOM. DURING THE VISIT THEY WERE
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JOINED BY DUP ASSEMBLYMAN KIM KYONG-IN. AS KIM

ATE-CHUNG WAS LEAVING YANG'S ROOM AT THE END OF THE VISIT, HE WAS TAKEN INTO THE ADJOINING ROOM BY THREE MEN WHILE YANG AND ASSEMBLYMAN KIM WERE FORCED INTO THEIR ROOM BY TWO OTHER MEN. BY THE TIME THEY WERE ABLE TO LEAVE THEIR ROOM AND GAIN ENTRY TO THE ADJOINING ROOM THE ABDUCTORS AND KIM TAE-CHUNG WERE GONE. YANG SAID HE HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY THE JAPANESE AUTHORITIES TO REMAIN IN JAPAN AS A WITNESS, BUT HE FELT HE MUST RETURN TO KOREA TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAD HAPPENED. HE SAID THE HE PLANS TO RETURN TO JAPAN SOON TO TESTIFY IF REQUESTED TO DO SO.

2. ALL SEOUL PAPERS CARRIED REPORTS OF JAPANESE POLICE INVESTIGATION, EMPHASIZING NEGATIVE RESULTS, HOWEVER LATE REPORTS STATE THAT SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN IDENTIFICATION OF A JAPANESE SPEAKING MAN WHO BOOKED ROOM USED BY THE KIDNAPPERS.

3. IN OTHER RELATED STORIES IT WAS REPORTED THAT THE NDP AND DUP PLAN TO SEND DELEGATIONS TO JAPAN TO CONDUCT SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS. AUGUST 13 RADIO NEWS, HOWEVER, REPORTS THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS REFUSED EXIT PERMITS FOR THE NDP DELEGATION ON THE GROUNDS THAT SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON HAS WITHDRAWN HIS ENDORSEMENT FOR THE TRIP.

4. AUGUST 12 KYONGHYANG SINMUN REPORTS THAT IN RESPONSE TO ROK REQUESTS FOR MORE BALANCED REPORTING THE JAPANESE PRESS ARE APPARENTLY BEGINNING TO PLAY DOWN THEIR COVERAGE OF THE ABDUCTION. WIDE COVERAGE WAS ALSO GIVEN TO REPORTED GOJ WARNING TO VISITING NORTH KOREAN OFFICIAL YUN KI-BOK CONCERNING HIS STATEMENTS LINKING THE ROKG TO THE KIDNAPPING.

5. EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED BY AUTHORITATIVE ROKG SOURCE THAT MRS. KIM TAE-CHUNG VISITED VICE FONMIN YUN SOK-HON ON AUGUST 10 TO REQUEST PASSPORT TO GO TO JAPAN. YUN TOLD MRS. KIM THAT JAPANESE
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AUTHORITIES WERE DOING BEST THEY COULD TO FIND HER HUSBAND AND ROKG BELIEVED IT BEST FOR HER TO REMAIN IN KOREA. YUN INDICATED THAT IF KIM WERE FOUND, GOVERNMENT WOULD IMMEDIATELY SEND MRS. KIM TO JAPAN. SOME NEWSMEN ARE AWARE OF MRS. KIM'S CALL ON VICE FONMIN YUN BUT STORY HAS NOT APPEARED IN PRESS.

COMMENT: YANG'S ACCOUNT OF KIDNAPPING, AT LEAST
AS REPORTED IN PRESS, IS LESS THAN LUCID. HIS
EXPLANATION OF EVENTS HAS NOT DAMPENED INEVITABLE
SUSPICIONS AND SPECULATIONS IN NON-GOVERNMENT
POLITICAL CIRCLES ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF HIS
INVOLVEMENT. ROKG CONTINUING TO KEEP FIRM
CONTROL ON MEDIA HANDLING OF CASE.
A PRESS SOURCE INFORMED US THAT INCOMING WIRE
SERVICE REPORTS MUST BE SUBMITTED TO ROK-CIA FOR
ADVANCE CENSORSHIP AND EDITING BEFORE PUBLICATION.
HABIB

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: KIDNAPPING, POLITICAL LEADERS, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SEOUL05355
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS HABIB
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730841/aaaabeab.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Nov-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <05-Dec-2001 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KIM TAE-CHUNG KIDNAPPING SUMMARY: WEEKEND KOREAN PRESS HAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE
TAGS: PINT, KS, JA, (KIM, TAE CHUNG)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005